

**What we claim is:**

1. A method of managing a communication network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, and a network management system, the communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, the method comprising generating, in respect of a said subnetwork, an off-network pointer exiting the subnetwork at one of said ports, whereby to establish a traffic carrying capability externally to the subnetwork.
2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the pointer is first generated in one of said layers and functionality at other layers is generated in response thereto.
3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the generation of said off-network pointer is performed by software.
4. A method according to Claim 1, further comprising identifying incomplete trails within a said partition.
5. A method of managing a communication network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, and a network management system, the communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, the method comprising determining those ports that represent valid termination points for trails, links and link connections in the subnetworks, whereby to generate trails interconnecting said connection termination points in different subnetworks.
6. A method according to Claim 5, wherein the valid termination points for trails, links and link connections are first generated in one of said layers and functionality at other layers is generated in response thereto.
7. A method according to Claim 5, wherein the generation of said valid termination points is performed by software.
8. A method according to Claim 5, further comprising identifying incomplete trails within a said partition.
9. A communication network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, and a network management system, the communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, and means to generate an off-network pointer exiting the subnetwork at one of said ports, whereby to establish a traffic carrying capability externally to the subnetwork.

10. A communication network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, and a network management system, the communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, and means to determine those ports that represent valid termination points for trails, links and link connections  
5 in the subnetworks, whereby to generate trails interconnecting said termination points in different subnetworks.

11. A network management system for a communication network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, the communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, the network management  
10 system comprising means to generate an off-network pointer exiting the subnetwork at one of said ports, whereby to establish a traffic carrying capability externally to the subnetwork.

12. A network management system for a communication network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, the communication  
15 network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, the network management system comprising means to determine those ports that represent valid termination points for trails, links and link connections in the subnetworks, whereby to generate trails interconnecting said termination points in different subnetworks.

13. A carrier carrying software adapted to perform the method as claimed  
20 in Claim 1.

14. A carrier carrying software adapted to perform the method as claimed in Claim 5.

15. Communication traffic signals transported across a communication network having a network management system according to Claim 12.

25 16. Communication traffic signals transported across a communication network managed by a method according to Claim 1.

17. Communication traffic signals transported across a communication network managed by a method according to Claim 5.

18. A user interface for a network operator enabling a method of managing  
30 a communication network to be performed, the network comprising a plurality of ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, and a network management system, the communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, the *method*

comprising generating, in respect of a said subnetwork, an off-network pointer exiting the subnetwork at one of said ports, whereby to establish a traffic carrying capability externally to the subnetwork.

19. A user interface for a network operator enabling a method of managing  
5 a communication network to be performed, the network comprising a plurality of  
ports, modelled according to a layer protocol, and a network management system, the  
communication network being partitioned into a plurality of subnetworks, the method  
comprising determining those ports that represent valid termination points for trails,  
links and link connections in the subnetworks, whereby to generate trails intercon-  
10 necting said connection termination points in different subnetworks.

20. A user interface for a network operator of a network management sys-  
tem for a communication network, the communication network comprising a plurality  
of ports modelled according to a layer protocol and being partitioned into a plurality  
of subnetworks, the network management system comprising means to generate an  
15 off-network pointer exiting the subnetwork at one of said ports, whereby to establish a  
traffic carrying capability externally to the subnetwork.

21. A user interface for a network operator of a network management sys-  
tem for a communication network, the communication network comprising a plurality  
of ports modelled according to a layer protocol and being partitioned into a plurality  
20 of subnetworks, the network management system comprising means to determine  
those ports that represent valid termination points for trails, links and link connections  
in the subnetworks, whereby to generate trails interconnecting said termination points  
in different subnetworks.